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Disciples of Christ in the City

W. Elbert Starn

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Wayne E. Testerman

Disciples of Christ
in
The City

by
W. ELBERT STARN



4/64

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W. Elbert Starn

*Executive Secretary
Disciples Council of Greater St. Louis*

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Disciples of Christ in The City

I—The City—A Mission Opportunity

It was with some sadness that Abraham Lincoln left the family cow behind when he moved from Springfield, Illinois, to Washington, D. C. That was part of the price one had to pay in that day to be President of the United States. Today no Springfield resident keeps a cow in a barn in his backyard as did Mr. Lincoln. A hundred years makes a difference.

When Alexander Campbell was traveling about our country, it was to a rural America that he preached. Few were the metropolitan centers then. It was on the westward moving frontiers that Campbell's followers established Christian Churches in small towns and in the open rural areas. Members of these congregations, now officially listed as Disciples of Christ, have since that day continued to think of themselves as a predominantly rural people. But a hundred years has made a difference with the Disciples of Christ, too. As our nation changed in 1920 from a rural majority to a rural minority, so the larger part of the membership of the Christian Churches has now changed from a rural to an urban classification.

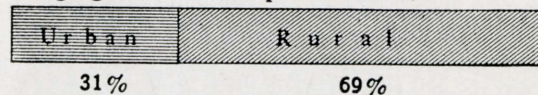
"Define your terms," some reader is saying. "What do you mean, 'urban'?" Urban does not mean what one young man thought it meant when he made this comment about a speaker: "He was a keen fellow. He had been asked to speak on the urban church, but as soon as he discovered none of us

were from the country, he changed immediately to speaking on the city church." This young man is not the only one who has been confused by terms which sociologists and census experts use with ease. For census purposes, the United States Census Bureau says that "rural" shall be used to describe any community of less than 2500 persons. Above that figure, communities are called "urban." Consequently the term "urban" includes relatively small towns and cities as well as the huge metropolitan centers with their many suburban incorporated areas.

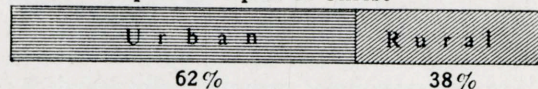
Generally speaking, our attention here will be focused on congregations located in the larger cities and metropolitan areas. At the moment, however, let us use the terms "rural" and "urban" as does the census bureau so we may see what has happened to our communion's membership after 150 years of history.

The charts used by Edwin L. Becker in *Disciples of Christ in Town and Country* are worthy of note. While this booklet, published in 1950, shows that 69 per cent of our congregations are located in rural areas, yet it also shows that 62 per cent of the Disciples are members of urban churches.

Congregations of Disciples of Christ



Membership of Disciples of Christ



So it appears that while there are more of our churches located in the country, yet a majority of our members are urban church people. Statistics show that this urban trend is increasing in our brotherhood.

"Rural" Missouri, with 800 Disciple congregations, has more Christian Churches than any other state or province in the United States and Canada. The total Disciple resident membership in the "Show Me" state was 130,100 as of June 30, 1953. Although a very large majority of these 800 churches are located in rural communities, yet 50 per cent of the Dis-

ciples in Missouri are members of urban churches. Furthermore, 25 per cent of the membership in the state belong to churches located in the two metropolitan centers: St. Louis and Kansas City. While we were once a rural people, even rural Missouri "shows us" that such a claim can no longer be made by the Disciples of Christ.

"So we as a communion are now more urban than we are rural. What of it?" That is a reasonable question. Yes, what difference does that make? Perhaps the realization of how we got that way will help us see what difference it makes.

Few metropolitan areas have a high enough birth rate to maintain themselves. Consequently their population increase comes from the outside. In years gone by, the growth of cities was due principally to the immigration of foreign-born people to this new world. Today the new city resident comes from the smaller community or from the farm. Due to the mechanization of the farm it requires fewer people to care for even larger farms than for those of yesterday. Likewise, small town opportunities are not sufficient to provide employment for all the young people who grow up in these communities. So today the city secures many of its workers from the youth and young adults of our towns and country areas.

Many of these young people who migrate from the country to the city were church people back home. What happens to their church relationship when they move to the city should be of concern to the churches from which they come. What happens to them while they are growing up in the church should be of concern to the city churchman. It is important, therefore, that rural Disciples understand the city church and be interested in its welfare. By the same token, it is important for city Disciples to understand the country church and contribute to its stability.

Paul puts this idea well when he says, "None of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself." (*Rom. 14:7 RSV*) So we might say, "No church lives to itself and no church dies to itself. If the rural church dies, the city church will have the responsibility of trying to train unchurched young people from the country who know nothing of the church, and who, consequently, may have little inclination to pay any attention to the church when they come to the city. Likewise, if the city church decays and dies, the country church might just as well quit trying to make Christians out of the young people who will be

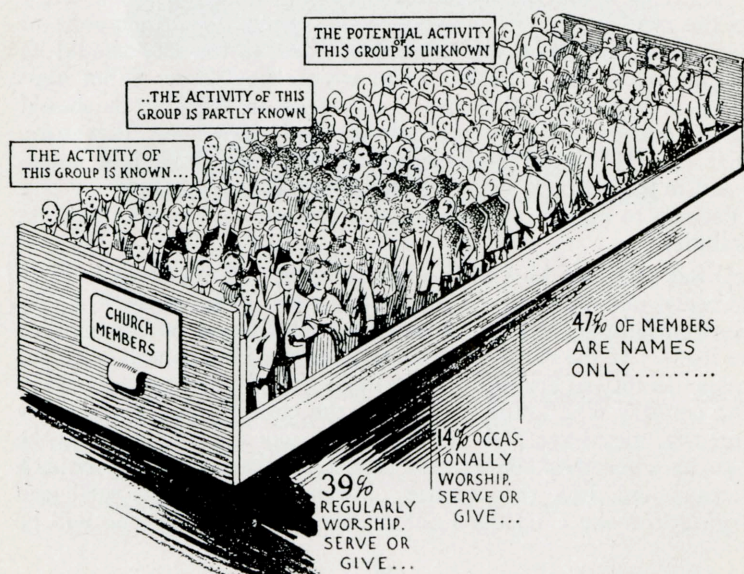
going to the city, because the heathen city will overwhelm them if there is no church to hold them steady.

• We all need each other. So we should know and be concerned about each other.

The City—A New Frontier

Few church people consider the city to be a mission field. Yet there are those who declare that it is the greatest missionary challenge facing American churches today. The Disciples have followed the frontier during the past century and a half. Will they follow this new frontier today? If so, here are several missionary opportunities which are open to them.

1. Our first home missions effort in the city should be with the non-resident church members who have moved to the city from smaller communities. Repeatedly our department of church development and evangelism of The United Christian Missionary Society has called attention to the increasing size of our non-resident listing of members—an increase which continues even though many churches have lopped off many names from these rolls because all that the home congregation knows about these persons is that “they have been gone



for years and no one seems to know anything about them.” The drawing on page 6 illustrates the situation.

Where, oh where have our church members gone?

Where, oh where can they be?

To the city church they should now belong,

But where, oh where can they be?

A sure way to eradicate an active church member would be to send him to some metropolis with the attitude on his part that he will never darken the door of the church unless he has a special invitation to come in. At the same time the home church would take the attitude that no one will ever tell any church in that city that a newcomer had arrived! In the small town everyone would know if a stranger moved into the community. In the large city, only the landlord and the public utility companies are aware of it, and they never tell anyone else about it.

It is inevitable that people will move. It is not inevitable they be lost to the church! To conserve the moving member's church relationship, the home church should furnish in advance to the departing member as much specific information about the churches in the new community as possible. Then the home church should send to the church or churches in the new community the name, address at his new place of residence, and some information about this member. Where there is a city association of Christian Churches in a metropolitan area, this information should be sent to this organization. The city association is thereby enabled to notify the church nearest the address of the newcomer so this congregation may help the new resident become active with a church in the community.*

2. As the Brotherhood faces the new city frontier in missions, a second responsibility which it should feel is for the underprivileged in the inner city who need Christianity today just as much as do the people who live in the suburbs. As cities have grown and residential areas have moved farther and farther away from the center of the city, many Disciple congregations have left the old inner city and relocated in the more desirable residential areas. These better residential areas need churches. However, that does not lift from us responsibility for

*The *Year Book of the Disciples of Christ* gives at the head of each county listing of churches the name and address of the city association, if there be one.

the religious welfare of the people who live in the older parts of the city. Dare we be a church which thinks it should serve only middle-class people?

Many who move into the city have their first place of residence in the older parts of the community. If we move entirely out of these sections, we say in effect, "Let someone else care for these people." Do we not have a responsibility for our own in the inner city as well as for a good share of the people who belong to no church?

Inner city work is a costly venture, for the inner city congregation has to do more than carry on the traditional church program. It must become a neighborhood house as well as a place for church services. Nevertheless, as we put missions money in projects in foreign countries where we know we may not have a work which becomes completely self-supporting for many years, so we ought to experiment with several pilot projects in the United States and Canada where we can help save souls for Christ even though the monetary returns be small.

At the 1952, International Convention of the Disciples of Christ in Chicago, a resolution on the Inner City Church was passed, urging the setting up of several such pilot projects. The resolution stated that inner city areas "present a picture of concentrated social maladjustment illustrated by divorce, corrupt politics, crime, delinquency, narcotic addiction, alcoholism, and every sort of social evil, indicating a desperate need for more adequate church influence." People living in these areas earn a below-average income and cannot support a church program large enough to meet their needs. The United Christian Missionary Society was requested "to select several churches in areas where the need is very great . . . and work intensively

We need strong churches in inner city areas like this.



from family to family with time to sit down and talk religion, with staff to engage the people in fruitful projects and rebuild neighborly and Christian relationships, and that these selected church areas be used as demonstration centers to determine what may be done in the inner city by our brotherhood."*

3. A third missions responsibility which the Disciples share with other religious bodies working in the city is for the reaching of "pagan" suburbanites. Many a home owner in the newer sections of the city is concerned with only the materialistic aspect of life. He builds a house. He has comfortable surroundings. He spends his Sundays and any other leisure time he has working on his yard, his buildings, and his hobbies. He feels little community responsibility because his business is downtown, while his bedroom is located in a different incorporated community. He may realize that he has a soul, but he is too comfortable or too busy to be bothered about it just now.

Such people need to be actively related to the church. In too many places the Disciples of Christ are not carrying their share of the load in taking the church to the suburbs.

Furthermore, we have not had a united brotherhood group studying the matter until recently. At the Portland Convention in 1953 a New-Church Strategy Committee composed of representatives of national brotherhood agencies, the state societies, and city associations met to study this problem. Such a study is certainly a step in the right direction if we are to face effectively our responsibilities and opportunities in the establishment of new city churches.

4. There are others in the city mission field for whom we have a responsibility. We need be concerned with not only the non-resident church member in the city, but with those who have never belonged to any church, who have never become Christians. The city is a field ripe for evangelism of non-Christians. Then, too, our responsibility is not only to the underprivileged but to the overprivileged, those who have so much of this world's goods that they have neglected the more important spiritual values of life. Many of these folk, of course, live in the suburbs, but we find them also in the large exclusive apartment buildings and in grand residential hotels within the city itself. Likewise we must face our responsibility to the laborers

*For the complete resolution see the 1952 Year Book of the Disciples of Christ, pp. 75, 76.

scattered throughout the city population, many of whom have no relation to the church. Here are people who might well become some of the most active of our church members. Nor should we overlook those called *the intelligentsia*. Many of these highly-educated people feel that religion (which they consider superstition) is beneath them, that it is something for the untutored and destitute. Often these are the people who hold key positions of leadership in our cities. How important it is to reach them with the true message of the gospel! Most of these folk—the non-Christians, the overprivileged, the laborers, the intelligentsia—can and should be drawn into the churches established in communities throughout the city. We must accept the fact that our responsibility is to all the people in all the communities of our cities.

Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest'? I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see how the fields are already white for harvest. (John 4:35)

II—All City Churches Are Not Alike

"These people are members of a city church, and they said to do it this way, so I am sure this must be the right way." With such words some speak of the church in the city as though it has a corner on the best procedures. Because cities are big and impressive, there are those who believe that the city church is therefore great in every way. What could be more erroneous?

Although some cities have large Christian Churches whose membership numbers in the thousands, that is far from being the case of many city congregations. Frequently large cities have small Christian Churches with membership rolls and programs which are much less impressive than those of county seat towns. It has been correctly said that in many cities one finds a transplanted country church. Such congregations may fill a real need, even though their activities are not often mentioned by the press.

As one studies the church in the city, he discovers that there are at least six different types of churches: the downtown and the boulevard church, the inner city institution, the neighborhood church, the suburban congregation, the rural-urban fringe church, and the national or racial congregation. Let us see how the Disciples in the city fit into such groupings.

The Downtown and the Boulevard Church

When large cities were once small towns, every institution serving the whole community tried to locate in the center of the community. This was true of the church. As the city grew and people built new homes farther and farther away from the center, some of the downtown churches decided to relocate in the outlying neighborhoods. Other congregations determined that their place would be forever in the center of the growing city.

When all churches were in the center of town and there was only one congregation of a given communion, whatever competition existed was between denominations. As communities increased in size to the place where churches sprang up in the outlying residential sections, the downtown church then had to face the fact that life henceforth would be different, and in many instances difficult.

Of those who grew up in the downtown church, many determined to stay with the church of their childhood. However, when the children of these loyal families became grown and were married, they were much less likely to make the long trip from their suburban homes to "old First Church."

To win new people to the downtown church when there is residential church competition is difficult even though the preaching in the downtown pulpit is unusual, the music and worship service are of high quality, and the program of church activities is vital. Many are the people who erroneously suppose that ministers of prominent downtown congregations are located on "easy street." These people think all one has to do is to stand up to preach, and people will crowd the doors at every service.

No large city church achieves success without a tremendous amount of work being done by the minister, and no city church requires more effort than the downtown church. Some churches in the center of the city succeed in maintaining a strong con-

gregation, but many fail. Since it is important to look at our defeats as well as at our victories, we want to sketch briefly the story of one of our old famous churches which has gone out of existence.

Old Central Church, located in the heart of Cincinnati, was once considered to be the great Christian Church of that area. As the Queen City grew, more and more large business buildings were erected around the church property. The church remained in the downtown location in which it had flourished. Slowly it declined. It never lost its pride, but it did lose its members. After many years, when the congregation was only a shadow of its former self, fire took the building out of the heart of the city. Even so, a small band of the faithful continued to meet in rented quarters. Finally, when life as a separate institution seemed no longer possible, the minister, who had served through many years, was retired and the assets of the church were turned over to the Camp Washington Christian Church, which is on the fringe of the downtown area.

To sketch the story of what happened to Cincinnati's Central Church is much easier than to advise what alternate fork of the road might have led to a vigorous, ongoing existence, such as some of our downtown churches know. Experience has proved that one essential to survival is to carry on a program which recognizes the changes in the environment of the church and attempts to cope with them.

As an example, Central Church in Indianapolis, in addition to providing an outstanding pulpiteer to attract its membership from all parts of the city, considers that it has an obligation to the children living near the church. For years it has included on its staff one person whose chief responsibility is to work

with the neighborhood children. Here is a church that has a sense of mission to the underprivileged as well as to the privileged.

Central Church of Denver serves a number of persons who are residents of the hotels in the downtown area. While a congregation cannot be maintained by the support of the transient hotel guests who are here this week and gone the next, this church, in addition to its many other helpful activities, fills a real need by providing spiritual strength and Christian fellowship to the many people who must spend a great deal of their lives in hotels.

In this day of housing developments in the vicinity of the downtown, a church which manages to continue to live through all the changes of the central city may now find a potential membership among the "cliff dwellers" in apartment houses in redeveloped areas. First Christian Church of Birmingham, Alabama, finds herself in this position. There are two privately-owned apartment houses and a government housing project in the immediate vicinity of the church. The church has drawn members from the apartment houses, but the downtown churches on the whole have had poor results in interesting tenants of the housing project in attending church. Many of these people have no church background whatsoever and thus are a mission opportunity. The Birmingham Ministers' Association recognizes the challenge of this area and is trying a concerted approach through a vacation Bible school. A few of the residents of the housing project attend First Christian, but the percentage is small compared with the total potential. Here is a field from which the church may draw as it seeks to recruit these unchurched people.

Frequently a downtown Christian Church is of real benefit to all the other Disciple congregations in the same city. In the eyes of the press and of the general public, a particular downtown church becomes "the cathedral church" of that communion. Because of its prominence, this church gives prestige which none of the other churches of the same communion command, but by which they benefit.

In many cities, the Disciples have no church located in the downtown, but they do have a "boulevard church" of size and prominence which serves in the same manner. In Detroit, the Central-Woodward Christian Church is such a church. It

*Old Central
in Cincinnati—
a former downtown church*



has become the well-known church of the Disciples in that metropolitan center. The Disciples are not well known in Michigan. Consequently, this kind of a situation might occur. Suppose some of the members of the Bethany Christian Church in Detroit are doing some visitation evangelism work in their neighborhood. A married couple whom the church callers are trying to cultivate may say, "We've not heard of your church before. We just happened to see it since we live near, so we dropped in for the services. What kind of a church is it?" If the team members reply, "We are Disciples of Christ," or "We are members of the Christian Church," or even, "We are Campbellites," that would mean nothing to this particular couple who grew up near Detroit. However, if one of the visitors asks, "I presume you have heard of the Central-Woodward Christian Church?" he would probably get an immediate answer, "Of course!" Then the Bethany Church callers say, "That is the same communion as ours!" Thus the visitors succeed in establishing their "church credit rating" with the prospective couple by citing the one big church of the Disciples in the auto kingdom of the world.

Too often the outlying churches do not fully appreciate the contribution made to them by the downtown or boulevard church. They complain because this prominent congregation cultivates and secures members in the vicinity of the neighborhood church. They fail to realize that some of the neighborhood church's success in reaching people who prefer a neighborhood church is due in part to the prominence given our communion by the large downtown or boulevard church.

Although some of our outstanding congregations continue to be successful in the downtown, rendering a real service to the membership and to the community as a whole, there are other downtown churches in the Brotherhood which are in the throes of the struggle for existence. One such body is the First Christian Church of Kansas City.

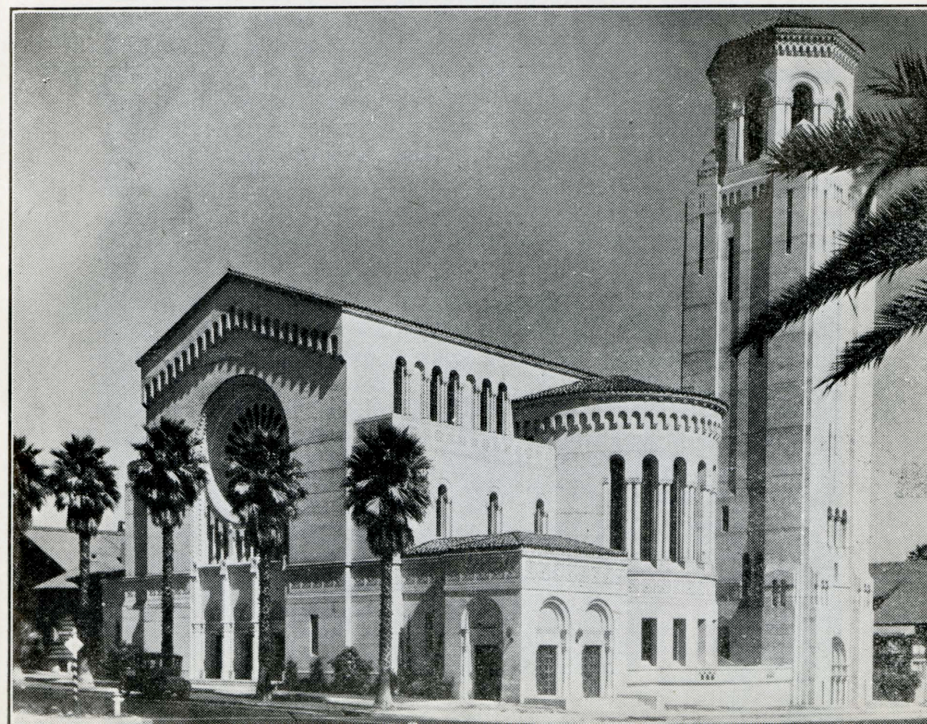
Situated across the street from the tall, modern city hall building, the depleted First Christian membership is unable to finance the kind of a staff needed to carry on an adequate program to serve the community. One minister cannot do alone the work which needs to be accomplished there. For instance, a gymnasium within the church building stands idle much of the time. Children who call "home" the rooms their parents have in the upper floors of nearby deteriorating buildings wan-

der into the church gym to play on week-days. Since unsupervised play in such a setting is not wise, the youngsters cannot be permitted to stay.

Here is human need. Here is a building with facilities which could be used to help meet this need. Here we fail because we have not been able to finance the leadership necessary to carry out the program which might build life. In our congregationally-operated churches, the matter has been viewed as being the job of the local church. Here is a work as important as that done in the hills of Kentucky or in the slums of Tokyo. It is not fair to ask the congregation of First Church to carry this responsibility alone—indeed, that is an impossibility. Who is there among us ready to give assistance in such situations?

Varied are the conditions of our downtown Christian Churches throughout the country. Varied is the degree of success exhibited by the congregations in responding to the situations faced. Great is the need for a well-trained national staff research person to advise our city churches about possible ways of meeting these perplexing situations.

A boulevard church: Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles



The Inner City Church

"Whoa now, professor!" I said to the instructor who was trying to teach me about the urban church. "What do you mean by the inner city?" Here in essence is what he replied.

Cities are apt to develop in concentric circles from the center out, like the rings which develop on the surface of quiet water when one tosses in a stone. In cities, these rings develop slowly, but they do develop.

In the first ring are the downtown structures: office buildings, banks, department stores, municipal buildings, libraries, and the like. In the second circle are wholesale houses, railroad yards, and light industries.

The inner city is usually the third ring. Here we find deteriorated dwellings. In this section there is a concentration of the "ills" of life including low wages, poor housing, crowding, poor light and air, poor play facilities, few trees and grass, dirty streets and alleys, high delinquency rate, inadequate food and clothing, more unemployment and relief cases.*

How do the Disciples of Christ solve the problem of the relationship of the church to the needs of the inner city residents? Most frequently we solve it by moving away from it. The files of *The Christian-Evangelist* contain many stories of Disciple congregations moving from the inner city. Sometimes the same story announces that the church building and property were sold to a mission board or church group of another communion for use as a city mission.

The circumstances prompting our churches to move are these. The members of the church are not living where the church has been located. Is it not sensible, then, for the church building to be moved to the place where the members live?

Still, we cannot forget that in some instances other church groups purchase this same property for use as a mission. Why do these groups take up this mission work instead of the Disciples? Is it because we have no concern for the people who live in the inner city? Have we decided that we are a class church which has no message for the less-privileged individual? Is it our conclusion that it is the job of other communions, the Salvation Army, and the Holiness groups to minister to these people? If so, what does that say about the completeness of

*Cf. Samuel C. Kincheloe, *The American City and Its Church* (New York: Friendship Press, 1938) p. 40.

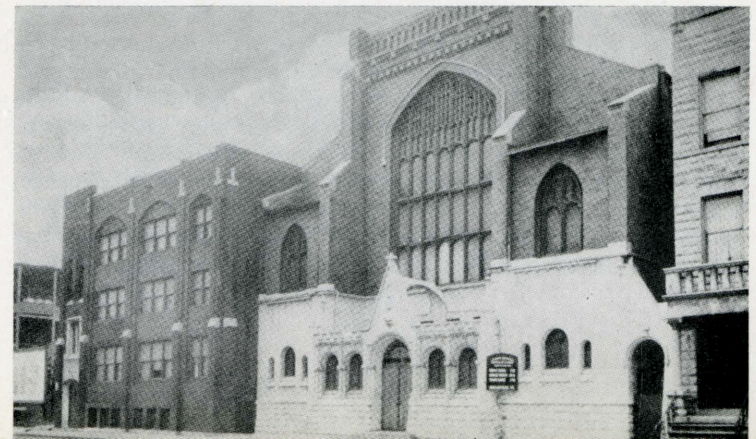
our gospel? There is no easy answer to the matter of the church in the inner city.

"Out of sight, out of mind" is the problem which we Disciples face. We move away from the inner city. We forget that it exists until, perhaps, there is developed a rehousing program. Then we find that the Roman Catholic Church which remained to serve the underprivileged has a building to serve the new rehousing development. Whereupon we moan about the situation.

Should our failure in the past to work together as a Brotherhood in developing a strategy to meet the problem of the inner city be any reason why we should not begin now to formulate plans to carry our share of responsibility in the inner city? The least we can do is to establish some experimental centers. No one congregation has the resources to carry on alone such pilot projects in the inner city. However, the churches of a city working unitedly with the state and national agencies might do something.

The Jackson Boulevard Church in Chicago is a well-known congregation that was established over eighty years ago in a fine residential section on the west side of the city. Through the years this neighborhood changed and became an inner city area. All of the other churches in this community moved out, but the Jackson Boulevard Church decided to remain to serve the community. The neighborhood serves as a "port of entry" for new families moving from the South into Chicago. Now this neighborhood is marked for redevelopment. Jackson Boulevard Church is the only old line Protestant church in the neighborhood. What a challenging opportunity is here presented!

Jackson Boulevard Church—a church that stayed in an area that changed.



The leadership resources in the Chicago Disciples Union, the city organization of our Christian Churches, is especially fitted to carry on experimental work in such a setting. But the Disciples Union can not finance this project alone. If the Brotherhood used this as a pilot center, we might begin to learn how we can assume our responsibility to the people who live in the inner city.

The Neighborhood Church

"When our family moved from a small county seat town to the city, we thought we would find city people and city ways very different and difficult for us. To our amazement, we discovered that there was less traffic on our street than there had been in the town we came from. City people, we were told, would be cold and unfriendly. Yet before the moving van was unloaded, our son had been invited to sit on the curbing with a Baptist neighbor across the street who was resting from mowing the lawn. That evening our Roman Catholic neighbors to the west had introduced themselves and told us about the family who built our house some thirty years before out of 'the best materials on the market.' Not many weeks had passed before we knew almost all the people on our street."

Although exactly the opposite is true in some places in the same city, the above story could be duplicated in many sections of many cities. Most urban people who do not have the good fortune to live in a friendly neighborhood setting still long for such homey, neighborly experiences. If they come to the city from smaller places, they have a longing for this small group life because they have enjoyed the resulting fellowship in the past. If they grew up in the city, they cherish the satisfactions which come from a small, intimate group just because the Lord created us with the inclination to know people and to be known by them.

The neighborhood church is one place where many city people find the opportunity to satisfy this need for an intimate fellowship of a relatively small group of like-minded people. Perhaps that is why the Disciples have so many neighborhood churches in our metropolitan areas—because people feel the need for that size church. In Dallas, Texas, out of 20 churches which reported resident membership for the *1953 Year Book*, 16 were congregations of less than 750 members. In Columbus, Ohio, out of 11 churches, 8 were under 750 in resident mem-

bership. In Portland, Oregon, out of 10 reporting churches, 8 were under 750 in size.

Besides the fact that adults enjoy the close fellowship of the neighborhood congregation, many families choose this type of church because it is easy for them and for their children to attend meetings without considerable travel. For Chi Rho and Christian Youth Fellowship activities, the youth can get to Sunday evening and through-the-week meetings without parents having to provide transportation. Furthermore, the young people in the neighborhood church usually attend the same public school and so have an at-home feeling with each other in the church. At least 50 per cent of the membership of a neighborhood church usually comes from within a mile radius of the church.

However, congregations can be too small. Students of the urban church say that a city church should have a minimum membership of 500 persons in order to carry on as effective a piece of work as needs to be done by its members. When a congregation has reached this size, it can should afford to hire a full-time church secretary so the minister is free from the many office details and can give his time to the more important aspects of service to the people. If the congregation increases to 750 members, it should be able to hire an associate minister or director of Christian education to further strengthen the program of activities. Beyond 750 membership, the returns of church participation by the membership diminish. The maximum degree of participation in program activities is reached at about a membership of 750, the students of the city church claim. Beyond that number, more effort is required to get the larger membership to do a proportionate amount of church work, even though the employed staff is increased.

One of our sins as Disciple congregations is that we have spent much more money on church buildings than we have on persons to carry on an effective program in those buildings. For example, the *1953 Year Book* lists 291 persons as ministerial assistants and directors of religious education. Yet there are 348 churches among us which have more than 750 members. These figures do not give a total picture, however, for some of these assistants are part-time workers and some serve churches with less than 750 members.

Some Christian Church leaders believe that the only kind of Disciple congregation the city needs is the large downtown

church or boulevard church with a great program and a big name. Other Disciple leaders feel that the only sort of congregation which we need to have is the vigorous neighborhood church of not more than 750 members. This writer believes that we need both types. There are many Disciples who prefer to travel many miles in order to be members of a very large church with an outstanding pulpit man, an excellent choir, and an unusual program of varied activities. There are other Disciples who long for the neighborhood-type church where one knows the entire membership. It is our opinion that to serve the needs of all, we must have both types of churches. If our church workers will recognize this, they will render a service to the prospective church members by trying to help them locate in the type of church which will meet their particular preferences.

The Suburban Church

Unless the Disciples want to become a disappearing Brotherhood, we must plant new churches in the suburbs as well as maintain what we have in the older parts of the city. Talk with a Methodist, a Presbyterian, or a Baptist about the make-up of the membership of the churches his communion has established in recent years in the suburbs. If he knows his statistics, he will tell you that only 25 to 50 per cent of the membership in any of those new churches had previously belonged to the communion that sponsored the church. The others joined because they wanted to be a part of a church located in their vicinity.

The writer believes that the Disciples have a witness to make for the oneness of God's people in the suburbs as well as in the older part of the city. Consequently, without competing with



*A neighborhood church—
Tonawanda,
New York*

other cooperative communions, we ought to bear our proportionate responsibility in establishing new congregations in the subdivisions which have been growing by leaps and bounds in every metropolitan area in the United States and Canada since World War II.

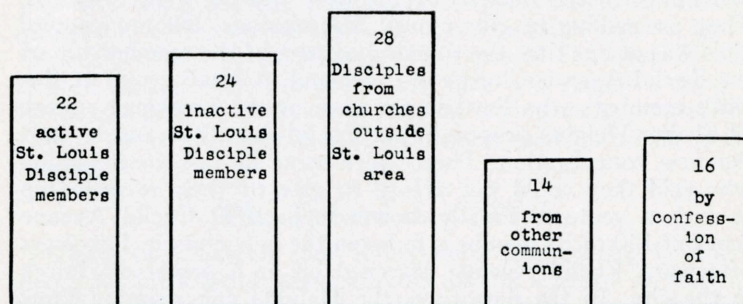
Reluctance to establish new congregations in the suburbs has been shown by the Disciples in some cities because the leaders feel they cannot afford to give away any members to help form the nucleus of the new church in the suburbs. They are willing to give money for missions, but not people! This was at one time the thinking of part of the membership of the Euclid Avenue Church in Cleveland. A small group of Euclid's members who lived in the then newly developed suburb of Shaker Heights proposed that Euclid send them out to start the new congregation. There were some in this congregation who said they could not afford to give of their membership in such a venture. Finally, however, in 1929 Euclid Avenue sent out 140 of its members to begin the new church. For years afterward Euclid Avenue marched on as a powerful church in the city. In the meantime, the Heights congregation grew to a total of 1042 resident members as of June 30, 1953. What a loss it would have been to Discipleship not to have the Heights Christian Church!

Unfortunately, some of the congregations which are most able to give of their membership are the most reluctant to do so. Other large churches among us know the truth of the scripture which says, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over." (Luke 6:38)

The High Street Church in Akron has given of its membership time after time to start new congregations in the outlying parts of that city during its period of rapid growth due to the thriving automobile tire industry. The High Street church continues as a congregation of 2,000 members, but how much stronger the Disciples are in Akron because High Street established new churches about the city. The great joy there is in such giving is known only to those who give.

When the St. Louis Disciples established the Affton Church, their first new suburban congregation in twenty years, on World-Wide Communion Sunday, 1951, a number of churches wondered if they could afford to contribute any members. Two years later, all churches which gave were as strong as they

had been before Affton was started. When an analysis was made of the 104 persons who were received into the new Affton congregation in two years' time, it was found that only 22 of these had been active in the other 14 Disciple congregations of the metropolitan area. Where did the other 82 persons who were received by the Affton church come from? This is the story.



Thus the Affton church is revitalizing the Disciples in its vicinity and at the same time is reaching many new persons.

Tremendous strides have been made by the Disciples in establishing congregations in the suburban housing developments which spring into existence in a matter of weeks. According to figures from the Board of Church Extension, our Brotherhood has established since 1945, 126 new congregations,* almost all of which have been in the growing suburbs of our cities.

The Los Angeles area has done an amazing piece of work in this regard. With the Christian Missionary Society of Southern California taking the initiative, assisted by the churches of the area, the department of church development of The United Christian Missionary Society, and the Board of Church Extension, there were established in this mushrooming Los Angeles area ten new Christian churches between January, 1949, and January, 1954. The opportunity to do more of the same kind

*Twenty-five states and Canada reporting.



George Harris

Black Star

George Harris

Black Star

A New Church Is Started in Affton, Missouri.

A temporary meeting place is found; ground is broken for a new building; the city association and the Board of Church Extension cooperate in planning the new unit.

of work in this place is great, but the capital outlay required is so much greater than the financial resources available that advancement here is slower than the opportunity.

Other parts of the United States and Canada also present opportunities, but these are not being seized because the Disciples in some of these areas do not have enough financial strength of their own to make the beginning, and national agencies cannot meet the demands. So our opportunity in this home missions area of work goes unmet.

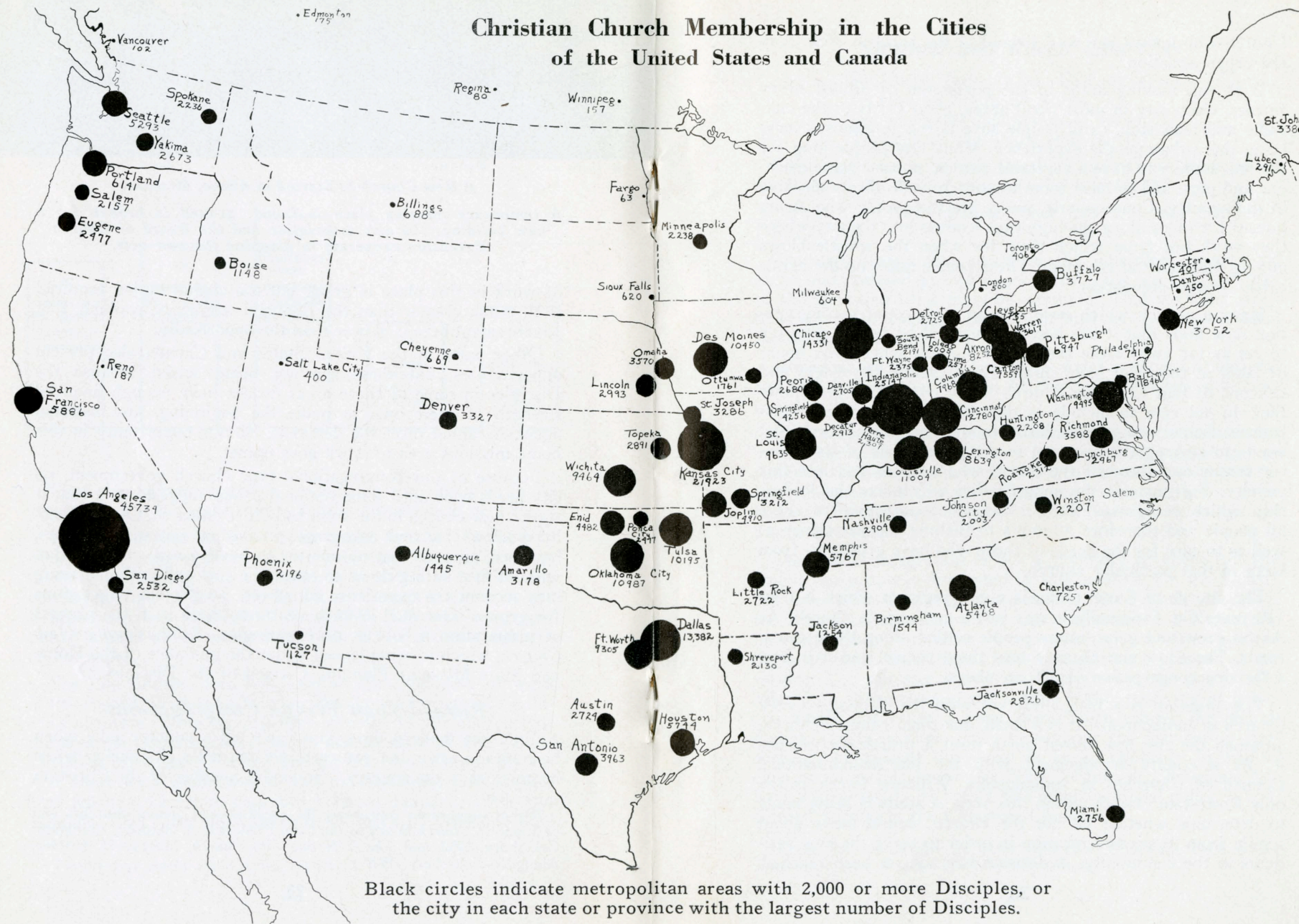
Because of our congregational type church government, no city needs wait until some national group suggests to it that it start a new church in the suburbs before doing so. Our brotherhood allows for and encourages individual initiative. It does, however, propose that no one try to build a new congregation without first sitting down to count the cost and without taking into account the experience of others. To provide suggestions for groups interested in such ventures, there is in the process of preparation a booklet of suggestions, *Establishing a New Church*, which is being issued under the guidance of the Home and State Missions Planning Council of the Disciples.*

Rural-Urban Fringe Congregations

"In these modern days, you can't tell a country jake when he comes to town, but you certainly can tell a city slicker when he gets out in the country." So said a member of the Christian

*Other suggestions concerning the establishment of new churches will be found in *Church Work in the City*, Frederick A. Shippey, Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1952, and *The Effective City Church*, Murray H. Leiffer, Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1949.

Christian Church Membership in the Cities of the United States and Canada



Church who knows her way around in the rural as well as in the urban situation.

With fast-moving autos in the possession of almost every farmer, electricity in most rural areas, good roads to the city, radio and television, rural people have access to almost everything that urban people experience. Many city people long for the opportunity to have a vegetable garden, to raise some chickens and pigs, and to have room to stretch as do those who live in the country. Consequently, many are the people who string houses for miles along the highways leading into the city where they work but from which they flee when the whistle blows ending their shift at the plant. These people make up the rural-urban fringe population.

Many a church which once was an open country congregation now finds that it has become engulfed by people who try to get as far away from the city as possible when their hours of labor at the plant have ended. Even though the elders and deacons of that Christian Church know city ways, oftentimes they do not care to include in their congregations these newcomers. Some young enthusiastic family comes to church and wants to revamp the program to meet the needs of its growing family and those of the others who have moved into this vicinity. Fortunate is the congregation which has the leadership which recognizes that it has an opportunity to serve all people and therefore attempts to include the newcomer as well as to care for the needs of those who have grown up from birth in that particular church.

The church at Stow, Ohio, is a congregation which is over 120 years old. Originally it was just a cross-roads church. As Akron grew and grew, many people settled along these cross-roads. The Stow church welcomed these people, and it is now a thriving congregation of 476 members.

The situation is a little different with the Williams Creek Church in Indianapolis. It is a small, one-room country church, although the city has moved north until it practically touches it. By a comity arrangement with the interdenominational Council of Churches in Indianapolis, Williams Creek is the only Protestant church within this area. A study is being made to determine whether or not the church should move about a mile from its present location in order to serve the new residents in the community. A decision has not yet been reached.

National and Racial Churches

In Christ there is no East or West,
In Him no South or North,
But one great Fellowship of Love
Throughout the whole wide earth.*

"And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth." (*Acts 17:26*)

"What God hath cleansed, that call thou not common."
(*Acts 10:15*)

Through hymns and scripture the Christian position on racial and national groups is set forth. That we fall far short of the Christian ideal must be admitted. That we must work to bring about changes which will lead us toward the ideal should be acknowledged.

Where do we Disciples in the city stand in regard to national and racial groups within our brotherhood? No one statement can describe our situation.

In local congregations, generally speaking, we can be included in the generalization that "there is no more segregated spot in America than the eleven o'clock Sunday morning church service." Consider the Christian Churches which you know. How many of them have members of more than one racial group? There are some.

That racial integration is not a generally accepted practice among our people is illustrated by this incident. On the Sunday our International Convention opened at San Francisco in 1948, the First Christian Church of Oakland received a Negro into its membership. A number of convention visitors from various parts of the United States and Canada were present at the service. The minister stated that many were the guests who asked him at the close of the service if this receiving of a Negro would not cause a great disturbance among the church members. Our leaders from throughout the convention constituency considered this event to be an explosive happening even for a people known as New Testament Christians. We have a long way to go before this inclusive racial policy is considered normal in the Christian Church.

*From *Bees in Amber* by John Oxenham. Copyright 1913 by the American Tract Society. Used by permission.

More doors may be open than we think. Through chance information we know that the Central Church of Denver has an inclusive racial membership. The Euclid Avenue Church in Cleveland has for years had Negro and Japanese American members. The Park Avenue Church in New York City opens its doors. In St. Louis, with its traditional southern attitude, there are Negroes who worship regularly in the Union Avenue Church. In pulpit exchanges and during vacation periods Negro ministers have preached in the following St. Louis pulpits: Webster Groves, Overland, Watson Terrace, and Compton Heights. There are other urban congregations within our brotherhood with members of more than one race.

The outstanding example of a congregation where there is "no East or West" and "no South or North" is the All Peoples Christian Church of Los Angeles. Here we have Negroes and Caucasians, Japanese and Chinese, Mexicans and Koreans, worshipping and working together unitedly in one congregation. It is satisfying to find in that congregation a Chinese leading the choir, a Japanese American serving as the minister of youth, and a Caucasian as the much loved minister of the congregation.*

There are national groups in cities which concern the Disciples today. From Puerto Rico, thousands of Spanish-speaking people have come to New York City in recent years. La Hermosa Christian Church and Second Christian Church in the Bronx are resulting congregations. Both of these churches have established missions for Puerto Ricans in other sections of New York. In Kansas City, through the support of the women of that district, a Mexican Christian Church carries on a program under the direction of Fidel Reyes, minister. In Texas, there are at least eight Mexican Christian Churches. There are also some congregations for the Japanese in California and Colorado. We Disciples have a Russian congregation in New York City, a Filipino church in Los Angeles, and several French Acadian churches in Louisiana.

It is understandable why there are "national" congregations in some cities. Frequently one who has come here from another country has a great desire to be with people who do things the same way he did them in "the old country." In work, at

*The program at All Peoples Christian Church and Community Center is discussed in greater detail in Section III, beginning on page 35.



*The Puerto Rican congregation of Second Christian Church,
The Bronx, New York City*

school, in the park, on the streets, he is aware of his differences in dress, in speech, in food preferences. He therefore wants some place where he can feel "at home." Is there any time when one wants to feel at ease more than when he is at church? So he seeks to worship in a church made up of people who think and act and dress as he does. Then, in his deepest religious experiences of life, he feels he is in the midst of a friendly, sympathetic congregation.

In some instances the predominance of one national group in a congregation is not planned that way by the leadership. Circumstances make it so. Because immigrants from a given country tend to settle in a certain geographical area in a city, and because they go to the church in the neighborhood where they live, it automatically follows that the congregation assumes the national flavor of the people who live there.

How varied have been the responses of some of the refugees from Europe whom our churches in the city have sponsored! Some prefer to be with a group which reminds them of the ways of the old country. Others specifically avoid attending "national" churches but instead seek to be a part of the ongoing stream of American church life in order to be assimilated more quickly. As Caucasians, they have the privilege of choosing which type of church experience they prefer. Would that all



*The Mexican Christian Church in Amarillo, Texas,
where Spanish-speaking people worship in their own language.*

who live in America had the privilege, without embarrassment, of becoming members of any church of their own choosing!

Long and heated have been the discussions about racial and national church groups as over against a policy that would let every individual feel free to worship in the church of his choice. For any congregation to be truly worthy of the name Christian, such an open-door policy should exist.

If such were the policy of all Christian Churches, would there still be congregations which are predominantly Negro or Japanese or Mexican? We believe there would be.

Our first reason is because most people are inclined to attend a church in their own neighborhood. Even though the Supreme Court has ruled that restrictive covenants cannot be enforced, thus making it legally possible for persons of any race to live anywhere they choose, yet in most cities public opinion serves to enforce such restrictions. Therefore we find that members of one racial group tend to occupy an entire area, and churches located in such neighborhoods are predominantly of one race.

The second reason we believe churches of one race continue

is because the opportunity of a minority group to express itself in leadership is much less prevalent in a bi-racial church than it is in a single racial group.

One of the greatest problems which urban Disciples face is the matter of the right thing to do when an area which was once predominantly white becomes predominantly Negro. It is a problem similar to that mentioned in the discussion of the inner city. This similarity shows that the difficulty may be as much economic, social, and cultural as it is racial. The question is this: Is the church responsible for serving the persons who make up its original membership? If so, then it is logical

*The East Sixth Street Christian Church in Oklahoma City:
A congregation of Negro Disciples*



for the building to be located in the place where the majority of those persons live. If, however, its responsibility is to a geographical area, regardless of who lives there, then the church building will remain, but the membership will change according to the changes which take place in the make-up of the neighborhood.

If any congregation desires to be truly racially inclusive, it should bear in mind that the way in which the minority groups are likely to become convinced that they are wanted and that they will receive equal treatment is to make the employed professional staff interracial. If the majority group is white, let the minister be white, but let the associate minister, director of Christian education, or office secretary be of the minority group. Then people will know that a congregation means business when it claims to be open to all. If the majority of the congregation is non-white, then let the minister be of the predominant group, and the associate be from the minority racial group. Let us remember, too, that an active evangelistic program among the minority group will prove convincing.

As congregations wrestle with these questions, let it be understood that their decisions have repercussions far beyond their neighborhood. What each church does, or fails to do, affects the thinking of the world about the teachings of Jesus Christ, and the likelihood that the church really believes those teachings.

III—Our City Institutional Missions

"I think there's got to be in every ward somebody that any bloke can come to, no matter what he's done, and get help."* These were the words of a resident of an inner city area, discussing the type of ministry the church should provide for city people.

*From *Man and God in the City*, by Kenneth D. Miller. Used by permission of Friendship Press.

The traditional city church program alone cannot answer his need. Part of the answer lies in the service provided by community centers. In such centers he finds persons trained to help him, a friendly, helpful attitude, an expression of genuine interest and concern, and Christianity in practice. In addition, and equally important, he discovers that here he achieves a sense of truly "belonging." He learns that he has a contribution to make to society as well as the opportunity to receive the help he needs to meet his problem.

The Disciples of Christ maintain two such institutions in cities: Mexican Christian Institute in San Antonio, Texas, and All Peoples Christian Church and Community Center in Los Angeles, California. Although these two centers were established to meet specific needs, at the same time, "any bloke" can turn to them for help.

Mexican Christian Institute

The area of San Antonio surrounding Mexican Christian Institute is truly one of great need. Here in this community of 17,700 Mexican Americans are found only two churches and three schools, but there are forty-five saloons and thirteen "hangouts." The tuberculosis death rate is the highest in the city, various epidemics are frequent, and family disorganization is evidenced by broken homes and neglected children. Living conditions in many cases are substandard. Spanish is the dominant language, even among some who are United States citizens. Others are not yet citizens. Wholesome recreational facilities, organized groups, classes in home-making, are too few.

In such a setting Mexican Christian Institute carries on its program of applied Christianity. Here in forty-five different groups or classes cooperation and sharing are learned along with cooking, sewing, craft-work, art, music, health care, reading, and writing. Here are play and reading rooms, singing, sports, folk games, Bible stories, community projects and activities. English and citizenship classes are conducted for adults who are handicapped because they cannot speak the language of their city, who are not yet citizens of the country in which they live. Of immeasurable service are the seven weekly clinics conducted at the institute: one maternity clinic, one immunization clinic, two clinics for the sick, and three well-baby clinics.

All of these organized activities are important and are serving a real need in this city; yet one observer has defined the contribution of the institute toward community betterment as "possibly its best work." Its pioneer work in building a sense of civic responsibility among Mexican Americans in San Antonio has brought admirable results. It has aroused its neighbors and the entire city to the need for such improvements as paved streets, adequate sewer systems, and a supply of fresh water for the Mexican community. Today it leads a drive for zoning ordinances which will restrict the number of saloons and liquor outlets in its vicinity. It works continually to stimulate home painting and cleaning projects. One of the staff members built his home in this area to encourage the residents to improve their own homes.

This forty-year-old institution has enlisted the cooperation of city authorities in a campaign against the prevalence of disease in its community. Through such cooperation, the clinics are able to function with well-trained doctors and nurses. In addition the city has helped in community drives for health education and prevention of disease. The institute has enlisted the aid of public schools in conducting classes in marketing, nutrition, and family life, as well as in conducting classes for adult education.

Perhaps most significant of all has been the contribution M.C.I. has made toward better relationships between residents of its community and the rest of the city. It has served as a dynamic influence in fostering an understanding of the Latin culture. Not only has it helped the Anglo community (as English-speaking persons and those of European stock are called) to appreciate the contribution which the Mexican culture can make to the total city, but it has helped the Mexicans to evalu-

Staff members of Mexican Christian Institute confer with community agency workers.



ate their own culture and recognize the customs that should be continued and made a part of their city's life. M.C.I. has helped these two groups to work together to help solve many problems in San Antonio.

Through all these group activities and major projects, however, M.C.I. has not lost sight of the individual. Its major concern is still with the individual who needs help with his personal problems. And always the members of the staff at the institute stand ready to counsel, to listen to a problem, to give a word of encouragement, to help "the bloke, no matter what he's done." One of the new avenues for service at M.C.I. is work with pre-delinquent boys and first-offenders. It is the dream that some day the staff will have a full-time family counselor and worker with such boys.

Just one block from the institute stands the Mexican Christian Church, ministering to the people's spiritual needs. A number of M.C.I. staff members take leadership responsibilities in the church. The church is not a part of the institute. Although formerly it was sponsored by the department of church development and evangelism, it is now self-supporting. The church and institute work together in many ways to maintain a balance between worship and service, both parts of the Christian gospel.

All Peoples Christian Church and Community Center

The church and community center at All Peoples in Los Angeles operate under the same general budget, although the church members are assuming more and more financial support, and some day the church will be self-supporting.

This institution is a daring attempt to put the principle of Christian brotherhood into action. It is an attempt that is succeeding. All Peoples rose out of turmoil caused early in World War II when Japanese Americans were evacuated and the section surrounding All Peoples filled with peoples of various races—Mexican, Negro, Chinese, Korean, Caucasians. The mingling of races, tongues, and temperaments, without direction or supervision, inevitably led to trouble in this neighborhood. "Zoot-suit" gangs raised havoc. There were interracial clashes. Unorganized play became destructive.

In such an atmosphere was planted a seed of faith and hope—"a house of prayer for all peoples." In the buildings formerly used for the brotherhood-sponsored Japanese Christian Institute, in October, 1942, All Peoples Christian Church and Community Center was born. The first church service was attended by two small Chinese children and the three members of the All Peoples staff. Nearly four years later, on May 26, 1946, the church organized with forty-three charter members. Today there are more than 300 members—Christians of all races worshipping together.

A church program alone could not meet the needs of this inner city area, where there are too few playgrounds, gymnasiums, social rooms, libraries, and organized group activities. And so the Community Center exemplifies Christianity in action. More than five hundred persons of all ages participate in the many group activities. The playground is crowded for sports of all kinds, while the playroom and library are well used. Clubs, interest groups, crafts, art, music, story hours, parties and hikes, summer camps, attract many other persons to the center.

The nursery-kindergarten, the first activity of the institution, continues to be one of the most rewarding of the center's services. Here forty-five pre-school children receive care and training while their parents are at work. Here they find an atmosphere of love and concern. Here they learn to work and play with children of other races and cultures. Here they find staff members of several races demonstrating such cooperation and friendliness. Here, too, some of them learn to speak English—and at least five nursery children have learned English with the words, "Thank you, God." For above all, here they learn to know the Father of all races, the Christ who taught true brotherhood.

A keynote of All Peoples' program—both in the church and in the center—is leadership training. An intensive, well-planned program guides the young people of the institution to develop into community leaders. Most of the activities of the church and center use leadership from among the members. The summer camp especially provides an excellent opportunity to train these youth. They begin as helpers, then become assistants, then junior counselors, and finally full-fledged counselors with major responsibility. The church school and vacation Bible school are other avenues of training and using local leadership.

All Peoples encourages its young people to attend college. These youth return in the summer and provide leadership for the summer activities. Some of them return as full-time staff members. At least three of All Peoples' members have entered the ministry, while other young people are already preparing for full-time service.

Just as Mexican Christian Institute works to further appreciation of other cultures, so All Peoples Christian Church and Community Center seeks to preserve the various cultures of its members, enriching the life of the city through the contributions of the several races.

All Peoples also reaches beyond its own community through activities and fellowship with other groups. Its athletic teams compete with other city athletic teams. At one time someone nick-named the All Peoples team "Little United Nations," for the five boys on the team represented five different racial groups! The Christian Youth Fellowship and other youth groups of the city often exchange fellowship and programs. All Peoples has also furnished leadership for a small church in the suburbs. Its groups and members often take part in various city-wide activities and projects.

One of the most significant contributions All Peoples makes to its community is the sense of "belonging" that it gives to all who come within its portals. Here, regardless of race or circumstance, any may come to find friendship, help, guidance, leisure-time activity, and spiritual nurture.

These two institutions sponsored by The United Christian Missionary Society are demonstrations of the type of service the church must render to cities. The need for this type of work is great, and these two institutions, significant as they

Leadership training is provided for youth at All Peoples Christian Church and Community Center.



are, cannot begin to meet the needs of the communities where they are located. Staff members of Mexican Christian Institute look with heartache upon the thousands of Mexicans within the area assigned them who are unreached by the Institute's program. Within twelve blocks adjacent to All Peoples live hundreds of unreached Mexicans. Leaders at All Peoples regret that these folk as well as others living within the community are not drawn into the full program of the center. There is much to be done within these two neighborhoods. The leaders do not lack the vision and the desire to expand, but they do lack the funds and personnel.

And while we are not fully meeting the challenge of these two communities, there are hundreds of other inner city areas across our continent that have no institutional mission of any denomination—or as our inner city resident has said, no institution that “any bloke can go to, no matter what he’s done, and get help.” Whose responsibility is it? Surely the Disciples of Christ have a responsibility to undergird the programs of the institutional missions they have established, to expand the services offered by these institutions, and to look toward the inner city areas that have no such service.

IV—Where Do We Turn for Help?

As cities grow and neighborhoods change, one of the things which city churches need is advice. Should we move or stay where we are? Should we expand our present facilities or should a new mission congregation be started to care for the increase of people? What is a good location as over against a poor location for a new church? How can a new congregation get started? What about organization? What about finances? When is it best for churches to merge or should they always remain separate?

Who has the answers to these questions? Where does one turn to find the answers? While there is no one person and no one organization from which all answers flow, the Brotherhood has given excellent help through a number of different bodies.

These agencies furnish also the channels for many needed services to cities which can best be done, sometimes can only be done, cooperatively.

City Associations

Although the Disciples are congregationally governed, they realize the value of working together in cities. As a result, there are in many cities organizations which bind together all the Christian Churches in the community to strengthen each other in fellowship, education, and church strategy throughout the metropolitan area. The *1953 Year Book* lists thirty-eight such “City Mission Organizations” which go by many names: Disciples Union, Central Committee of Christian Churches, City Missions Board, Christian Council, and others. There are ⁶ five full-time men employed by Disciple city organizations in the following places: Chicago, Cleveland, Indianapolis, Kansas City, and St. Louis. *Houston Tex.*

Whether operating with paid leadership or volunteer personnel, these city groups conduct many varied activities. For example, the Dallas churches, working together, have had the largest Disciple leadership education school in the United States, numbering 500 some years. What no one church could do alone, they have accomplished together.

*Christian Churches work together in city associations.
Members of the Disciples Council of Greater St. Louis
discuss one of their projects.*



Many people believe that one of the reasons the Disciples are so strong in Kansas City is the fact that for many years Mr. and Mrs. Frank Bowen served as the employees of the Disciple City Missions Board, establishing a new church here, and when it was on its feet, moving to another new part of the city and establishing another new church there. The same kind of thing is being continued under the leadership of Wayne Testerman, the present city executive.

The Cleveland Disciples Union, with Lawrence Mains as its executive head, has been studying ways in which it can deal successfully with the changing areas of that community. A report in *The Christian-Evangelist* (November 18, 1953) reads:

"Through the assistance of Disciples Union funds, the Central congregation, one of our growing Negro churches, is purchasing the Glenville building. The Glenville members have voted to accept the invitation to unite with the newly organized Lakeshore Christian Church in Euclid, Ohio. Euclid Avenue Church plans to relocate its congregation to the east of its present site."

Among the many activities of the Chicago Disciples Union, one interesting event is the annual music festival and hymn sing in which the combined choirs of the Christian Churches present a program which includes considerable congregational singing by the audience made up of the membership of the churches. B. Fred Wise serves as the musical director and J. J. Van Boskirk is the city executive who sees that this and many other things happen to help the Disciples know that they are part of a metropolitan fellowship.

The pride and joy of the Indianapolis Christian Church Union is the new Arlington Heights church which is the result of the financial support of all the churches of the city, serving a sizable suburb, with the city secretary, O. W. Williams, serving as the first minister.

If the St. Louis Disciples Council were to point to its outstanding achievement during the past year, it would mention the mergers of four small churches into two stronger churches. While advance rather than retreat is the aim, in these cases the merger of the Clifton Heights and Winona churches into the Watson Terrace congregation will strengthen the Disciple witness in a new section of south St. Louis. Likewise, the merger of the Baden and the Northwest churches into the North-

side Church to be located on a five-acre plot in a new housing development on the north side is likely to result in more persons won to the church than would have been the case by either congregation working separately.

Seminaries

Although the rural church has long been emphasized in seminary training of ministers, it is almost a new thing among us to have schools give attention to the special needs of city churches and their ministers.

Butler University's School of Religion in Indianapolis has on its staff one professor, Beauford Norris, who is charged with the responsibility of including the urban church in his teaching. This school, in cooperation with The United Christian Missionary Society, has included in its summer seminars one which has to do with the urban church. Through visiting professors and authorities in the urban field, Butler is beginning to make an outstanding contribution to the Brotherhood. Among the persons who have been brought to the campus for the three weeks' seminar in June are H. Paul Douglas of New York, Samuel C. Kincheloe of Chicago, and Frederick A. Shippey of Nashville. Scholarships are offered to selected ministers from throughout the nation to attend these seminars.

State Societies

Through the years, the strengthening and steadying hand among our churches in the city and in the country has been that of the state secretary and the organization which he represents in his state or area. Many a city church is helped by heeding his counsel.

As expansion and relocation are charted by the cities in Iowa, they can call on a full-time state staff member of the Iowa Christian Missionary Society who is employed to give guidance in the establishment of new churches. As the churches in Dayton, Ohio, look over their possibilities, it is the state secretary who is called in. Los Angeles could not possibly have done what it has done were it not for the fact that the State Society is right in on the ground floor. Washington, D. C., and Baltimore look to the Capital Area organization to advise and stand by them.

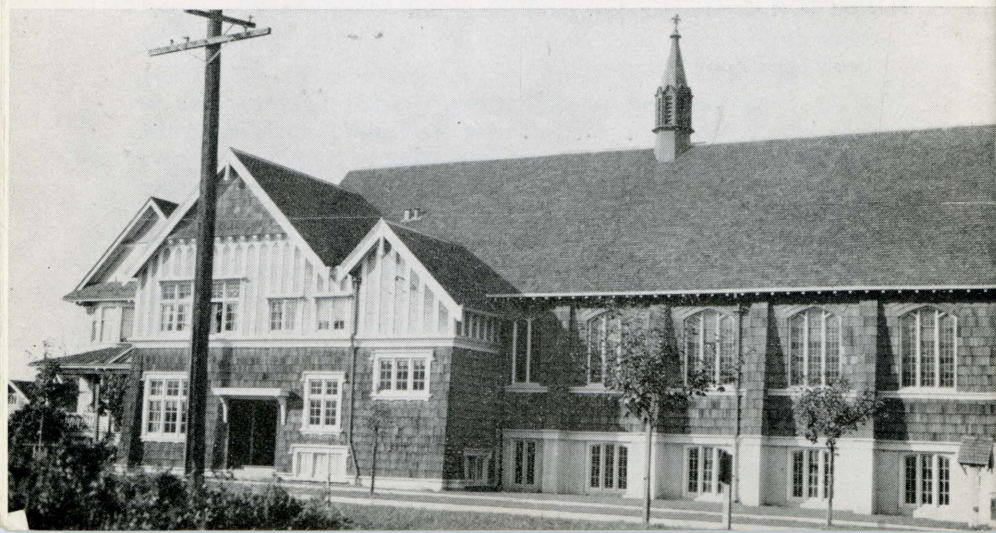
It is amazing that, with the multitude of calls which are made on our state staffs, they have been able to give such tremendous leadership to the churches in the cities.

The United Christian Missionary Society

The United Christian Missionary Society serves the city in a number of ways. Its most direct help to the city church comes through the urban work section of the department of church development and evangelism, established in 1947. The national director of urban work counsels with city churches and helps them to solve their problems, plan their action, study their growth or decline. He helps these churches to recognize the trends of their community development and suggests ways in which they might meet the challenges and opportunities of change. He works with city associations to plan long range programs for ministering to their cities.

Many of our churches in the United States and Canada receive financial assistance through the church establishment section of the department of church development and evangelism. Some of our strongest city churches today were once aided by funds from The United Christian Missionary Society. This is true of University Christian Church of Seattle, Washington, Central-Woodward Church of Detroit, Central Christian of Denver, St. Charles Avenue Church of New Orleans, and others.

Churches like Central Christian, Vancouver, B.C., receive aid from The United Christian Missionary Society.



When new cities grow out of nothing in places like Boulder Dam, or when atomic development projects create communities like Oak Ridge, or when military camps flood an area with people as occurred at Hattiesburg, Mississippi, during World War II, it takes more than the resources of a state society to cope with the situations which seem to develop overnight. It is in places like this that the department of church development and evangelism of the United Society has helped the state and the local church to meet the situation. Through the counsel and financial assistance of this department, we Disciples have come much nearer doing our share than would have been the case otherwise. Sometimes the Society has strengthened the hands of those who were already working through a Christian Church on the field. Sometimes it has joined with others in an ecumenical relationship which enabled the Disciples to help serve a definite community which before had not been church.

The work of the United Society in the realm of institutional missions has been discussed in another part of this booklet. Yet we should not overlook the significant city service that was once rendered through the Society at Flanner House, an outstanding social service center which helps many of the Negroes of Indianapolis. This community center was formerly a project of the Society, but the welfare agencies of Indianapolis recognized the contribution it was making to city life and assumed the financial support for its work. The Disciples still have a share in its program and influence, however. Cleo Blackburn, the director, is a Disciple minister. Some of our missionary candidates receive intern training at Flanner House and make a fine contribution to this work in an inner city area. The department of social welfare of the United Society sponsors week-end work camps at the settlement. In these interracial work camps our young people engage in construction projects at the center and in the community. At the Flanner House summer work camp leaders are trained to direct other work camps across the country.

In addition to sponsoring work camps in some city areas, the department of social welfare also serves the city through conducting community clinics in which churches come together and seek to solve the problems confronting their communities. Through these clinics they become acquainted with the community agencies serving their city.

Board of Church Extension

Although this national agency of the Disciples came into existence primarily to help churches work out their finances in connection with the erection of church buildings, it has, since its beginning in 1884, accumulated much experience in the matter of what makes churches succeed and what causes them to fail. It has given individual congregations, city associations, and state and provincial societies valuable counsel in the matter of the best locations, the amount of space needed, the organizational pattern to follow, as well as sound financial advice. Its loans—both interest-bearing and interest-free—have helped hundreds of city church buildings to come into being. Its experienced architects have given invaluable advice in designing and programing. Its counsel has helped many congregations to succeed rather than fail.

Home and State Missions Planning Council

One of the important steps taken to help us face the problems peculiar to the Disciples in the city came in the formation of the Urban Work Committee within the Home and State Missions Planning Council of the Brotherhood in 1951. Through this committee, many of the situations facing Disciples in the city are studied by the city, state, and national secretaries along with the ministers and lay people from our city churches and professors from our seminaries who make up this committee.

International Convention

Seldom do we think of our convention channels as doing anything specifically for the city church. Yet, although this is not an organized agency serving the city as do the other agencies, the convention has helped to focus brotherhood attention on the needs of city areas by passing resolutions concerning city problems, sponsoring tours of city churches as part of the convention program, and working for non-discriminating provisions for all Disciples in convention cities.

The Brotherhood is doing much to help forward our work in the city. As we continue to grow as an urban people, we shall need to give even more attention to the ways in which cities affect churches and churches may affect cities.

V—What Can We Do?

If you were asked to state what constitutes a mission field, how would you answer the question? Is it not determined by the existence of people in some spot where Christian work is much needed but where that work is not being carried on effectively?

Few are the people who have thought of the city as a mission field. Yet parts of our great cities are as much in need of the ministry of Christ as are the slums of Tokyo. Why is this true? Because at home we have had a concern about "our kind" of people and have too often forgotten the persons left behind when our churches have moved out and out and out into the better neighborhoods. This responsibility belongs to someone else? Who is someone else? "Christ has no hands but our hands to do his work today."

"It costs too much to work in the slums," some people say. But is it not expensive to do mission work in Africa and Japan and Thailand and India? Yet we work there, because there is great need. There is also great need here. Just as the city church cannot afford to forget the rural church nor the rural church the city church, so we cannot forget countries abroad, nor can we forget the decaying centers in our midst which need our attention. It is not a matter of either one or the other. It must be "both and."

The "down-and-outers" are not the only ones who need mission help. The "up-and-outers" also need Christ's influence in their lives. We Disciples of Christ must plant many more new churches in the growing edges of our cities than we are now planting, or we become a dying Brotherhood. Here, too, is a great mission field. Some cities are able to carry on alone at a slow pace such expansion work. In every metropolitan center, and in many other cities, there are places where the field is open to us if our people are ready to enter in with the necessary resources. We are doing a little here and a little there, but we are barely touching the opportunity before us.

On the national level we Disciples must continue to provide trained skilled leadership and strengthen the urban work program. Such a program can help existing city churches find their

way beyond the maze of dead-end paths to the path that leads to continued church life and service.

May We Be of Assistance?

To say that we are not doing all we need to do is not to say that we are doing nothing. One of the ways in which every church member can be of great assistance is to support the organizations which are already at work in the city. These are summarized in the preceding chapter.

One kind of support which is needed is financial. Every city program which these agencies of the Brotherhood try to undergird will take tremendous sums of money. However, when the Methodists raise twelve million dollars for church extension in the homeland, and the Congregationalists raise four million, and the American Baptists vote eight million, it is conceivable that the Disciples of Christ have a stewardship responsibility along with these other Christian bodies in this type of mission work. For our own sake as well as for the sake of our brothers in the city, let us give to our organized work in order that by working unitedly we shall assist God as he looks over the city, longing to offer the help which is needed.

Let's Be Intelligent

Another type of support which is needed is an awareness of the needs of the city and of the opportunity we have in meeting these needs. To be so aware will help to create an attitude of mind in our congregations which will result in the taking of bold forward steps by our brotherhood.

People "in the know" say that it is important for us to be aware of what is going on throughout the world, because in this day everyone is our neighbor. If it is considered vital for us to know about other people beyond our borders, how much more important is it for us to understand the people living within our boundaries! One way to become aware of the needs of a city and the work being done by Disciples in urban areas is to visit urban communities and institutions. If "eye-witness learning" is not possible, the next best thing is to read about the city. Even the city resident will discover that reading broadens the outlook and understanding. Let's be intelligent about our own work in our cities by following through our brotherhood publications the development of our city churches and institutions.

Every City Church Member Should

Because we have a democratic, congregational type of church government, some church members in the city are inclined to say, "We will do as we please, regardless of what any other Christian Church thinks or says!" So far as church polity goes, that is permissible. In the country one's church may be the only one for some miles around. Consequently, what that church decides to do does not greatly affect neighboring churches. But in the city, every church member must realize that what his congregation does affects the other churches in the city.

If a city church decides to move from one location to another *every church member should* ask: "How will this move affect the other churches in my brotherhood and in my neighborhood? Is this a move that will strengthen the other Disciple congregations or will it lessen their chance to do effective work?" The fair thing would be to ask one's neighbors how they feel about our proposed moves.

Every city church member should ask, when his congregation thinks of moving, whether it is leaving a considerable number of people unchurched because of this change. If so, is it wise to make the move, or should the church stay where it is and, with the other members of the Christian Churches of the city, consider the establishment together of a new mission church in the outlying neighborhood into which it was thought the church might move?

Every city church member should ask, when the congregation considered moving, whether the area in which it is now located will someday be rebuilt with many new families occupying this old neighborhood. If so, does the congregation have the right to give up a site which in later years would be very much desired for a church, the cost of which would be prohibitive if purchase were desired when the redevelopment occurs? In church planning it is necessary to be "wise as serpents and harmless as doves."

Every neighborhood church member should remember that there are some churches which are large downtown or boulevard congregations that help the name of the Brotherhood to be known. To have a membership which makes possible such prominence, this congregation must draw from all over the city.

Every downtown or boulevard church member should keep in mind that no boulevard congregation can serve satisfactorily all the needs of all the people. Neighborhood churches are necessary, and the downtown or boulevard churches should do all they can to encourage and uplift such churches.

Every Disciple should remember that ministering to the needs of the city is a concern of urban and rural Christians alike. To serve more adequately these needs we must strengthen the urban work section of the department of church development of The United Christian Missionary Society, undergird the work of institutional missions and pilot projects in the underprivileged areas of our cities, provide resources for the state societies. City church members should strengthen the work of their city association, that these local agencies may better serve their metropolitan area.

Every Disciple should remember that we have never claimed to be the only Christians, and therefore we cannot expect to save the city alone. We must give of our leadership, our time, our money, to make possible effective inter-church programs through city church federations, binding together all the communions of the city, so the forces of secularism in the city may feel the uplifting spiritual influence of the church. We must cooperate in comity agreements, working with other boards to plan the churching of suburbs and new communities, so that some areas will not have a number of churches of several denominations in one community, while other communities go without any church whatsoever.

Every church member should remember that he is a child of God, endeavoring to honor Jesus Christ by his service to mankind whom God has created. A part of his mission lies among those who spend their lives in America's teeming cities.

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